



MONTANA PUPIL TRANSPORTATION NEWS AND UPDATES

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SCHOOL BUS INSPECTION FORMS DUE TO OPI ON OR BEFORE JANUARY 31, 2002.

Please plan ahead for these inspections. All school buses must pass inspection by January 31st to receive full reimbursement for second semester.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

When you are considering making changes to bus routes, please keep the following law in mind:

“MCA 20-10-131 Duties of the County Transportation Committee.

(1) It is the duty of the county transportation committee to:

- (a) establish the transportation service areas within the county, without regard to district boundary lines, for each district that operates a school bus transportation program;
- (b) except as provided in subsection (2), approve, disapprove, or adjust the school bus routes submitted by the trustees of each district in conformity with the transportation service areas established in subsection (1)(a);
- (c) approve, disapprove, or adjust applications, approved by the trustees, for increased reimbursements for individual transportation because of isolated conditions of the eligible transportees residence;
- (d) conduct hearings to establish the facts of transportation controversies that have been appealed from the decision of the trustees and act on the appeals on the basis of the facts established at the hearing; and
- (e) determine if geographic conditions make it impractical for a child to attend school in the district of residence, in accordance with MCA 20-5-321(1)(b).

(2) In a emergency situation, a temporary bus route change may be approved by the county superintendent. A bus route change approved by the county superintendent must be confirmed by the county transportation committee within 30 days in order to be continued for a period longer than 30 days.

(3) When the county transportation committee reviews a request for a new bus route or a change to an existing route, the committee shall consider the following:

- (a) a map of the existing and proposed bus route;
- (b) a description of turnarounds;
- (c) conditions affecting safety;
- (d) the total mileage and change in mileage of the affected bus route;
- (e) the approximate total costs;
- (f) reasons for the proposed bus route change;
- (g) the number of children to be served;
- (h) a copy of the official minutes of the meeting at which the school trustees approved the new bus route or route change; and
- (i) any other information that the county transportation committee considers relevant.”

The number of students on any bus cannot exceed the rated capacity of that bus. When you are running two legs or segments with the same bus and different students, please put the legs on two separate TR-1 forms.

Section 10.7.115(5) of the Administrative Rules states: “If a bus route is made up of a series of legs where one complete set of students disembarks from the bus and a new set of students boards, the riders must be reported on more than one TR-1 bus route form. The district must report the legs as separate parts of a single route (e.g., Route 1A, 1B, and 1C) by submitting a separate form for each section of the route ending where all the students disembark to board another bus or to attend school before the bus continues to another destination.”

STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL BUSES IN MONTANA

The draft Montana School Bus Standards are posted on OPI’s website for your review. Go to www.opi.state.mt.us select <School Finance> from the drop down menu of Programs and Services of OPI, and then select <pupil transportation>.

The Pupil Transportation Advisory Committee will meet on January 29th to put the finishing touches on the 2002 Standards for School Buses in Montana. The Advisory Committee consists of district transportation directors, bus contractors, representatives from bus companies, the Montana Highway Patrol and the State Department of Transportation, plus appropriate OPI staff.

Since You Asked

Can a bus driver use an out-of-state commercial driver's license to drive school buses in Montana?

MCA 61-5-103 requires that a person residing in Montana for more than 30 days is considered a resident for driver's license purposes and must therefore have a Montana commercial driver's license.

How often does a driver need to have a physical to be "certified"?

As part of the Commercial Drivers' License, drivers are required to complete a Department of Transportation Physical every two years.

Our driver can't get into a First Aid class before her card expires. Her card will expire 10 days prior to the class. Can we get an exception that will allow her to drive during those 10 days?

Administrative Rule of Montana 10.7.111(f) requires that a driver hold a valid basic First Aid certificate or certificate from an equivalent or more advanced First Aid course as part of the requirements to be a fully qualified school bus driver. The OPI does not have authority to grant an exception.

Does a coach, teacher or group sponsor need to be "certified" to drive team members to the game?

The requirement for a driver to hold a current Montana School Bus Driver Certificate applies to the transportation of pupils to and from school. Driving to a school related activity does not technically require a Montana School Bus Driver Certificate; however, for professional and safety reasons, the Office of Public Instruction strongly recommends anyone transporting pupils possess a Montana School Bus Driver Certificate.

At a minimum, the driver must have a license appropriate for the vehicle being driven and a valid Department of Transportation physical exam when a commercial drivers' license is required.

Note: In Montana, a valid commercial drivers' license is required to drive any size bus, including a van designed to carry 10-15 passengers, even though that type vehicle cannot be qualified as a school bus because of its construction. (See A.G. Opinion Number 53, Volume 40.)



PROMPTLY RETURN ANY TRAINING VIDEOS THAT YOU HAVE CHECKED OUT. OTHER TRANSPORTATION GROUPS ARE WAITING THEIR TURN.

Those of you who have videos currently checked out will be getting a phone call soon. Due to time and workload constraints, I have not been able to monitor the training program as well as I would like to. Please return the videos promptly.

IMPORTANT DATES

Mid January 2002 TR-5's and TR-6's due to Districts from OPI (ARM 10.7.101)

January 31, 2002 Bus Inspections for 2nd semester must be passed by this date in order to ensure full funding is possible for the semester. (ARM 10.7.101)

February 1, 2002 TR-5's and TR-6's due to County from Districts (ARM 10.7.101)

February 15, 2002 TR-5's and TR-6's due to State from County Superintendent (ARM 10.7.101)

March 25, 2002 Transportation Aid Reimbursement made to Counties for distribution to schools

Update driver certificates, bus inspection forms, route information and contracts regularly.